

VOTE - Voter Outreach Through Education Washington Secretary of State

CURRICULUM GRADES K-4

TEACHER: LESSON PLAN 5

THEME: LOOKING BACK BUT STEPPING FORWARD

Engaging students in discussions about voting is an excellent way to help them move from shallow to deep thinking, and to demonstrate the higher order thinking skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The exercises below are designed to help students internalize the importance of voting so they are more likely to become active voters when they reach adulthood.

Tasks:

1. Compares and contrasts different stories and/or accounts about past events, people, places, or situations, identifying how they contribute to our understanding of various cultural groups.
2. Explains how people create places that reflect ideas, personality, culture, and wants and needs as they design homes, other structures, and public places.

ACTIVITY:

Talk with students about who has been able to vote throughout our history. In the beginning, only "free men" could vote. Women have been able to vote only since 1920. (This could be a good place to talk about suffragettes who marched and protested in order to get the vote; these are people who made a difference.) It has been only since the 1960s that African-Americans in many parts of the country have been able to vote. (This could be a good time to introduce the concept of "civil rights.")

Ask students what difference it would make in an election if only men could vote? Only women? Only white people? Only people of color? Only young people? Only senior citizens? Only people of a certain religion? How do they think the results might differ?

Ask students to give brief oral reports on "Why I plan to register and become an active voter when I turn eighteen."

Discuss how voting has had an impact on ideas that affect the way we live today. Include voting done in Congress, in state legislatures, in state and federal courts, and in local jurisdictions. Examples: Laws passed in Congress and state legislatures determine how much we pay for gas; a close Supreme Court vote determined that George W. Bush should be our president; state legislatures vote on how much money schools should get and how much teachers should be paid; government officials vote on how much money poor people get so they can feed their families; in some communities, officials vote on the height of buildings, how many houses can be built on a lot, and even the colors that can be used to paint houses; in farming communities, votes determine price supports and subsidies.

Ask students to think about what our world would be like if there were no elections. How would things get done?

Ask students if they have voted on anything, e.g., a major league all-star team, a club officer, the captain of an athletic team. How did they decide on how to vote? List their reasons on the board. Point out that people vote for many different reasons, and they are all important.